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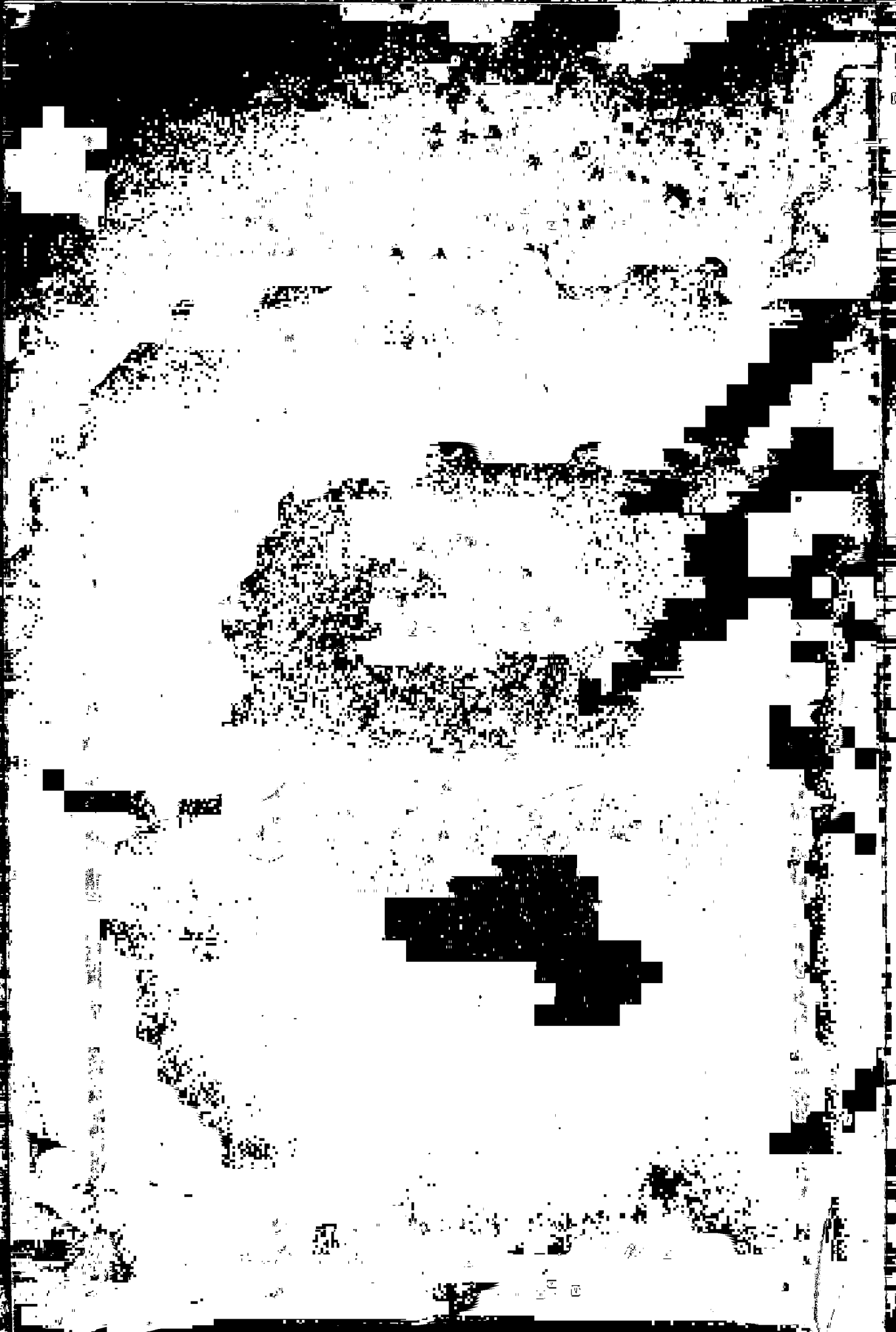
# Sikhs Today

*Struggle for  
Human Rights*



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### **DEDICATION:**

This effort is dedicated  
to those who laid down their lives  
in the cause of Sikhism

<https://archive.org/details/namdhari>

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## FOREWORD

In June 1985, Indian Prime Minister Rajive Gandhi came to United States as a guest of President Ronald Reagan. In various statements both leaders expressed their dislike for "terrorism." Sikh activities in the United States were particularly the focus of official attention.

However, on the day of Mr. Gandhi's arrival (June 11), President Reagan issued an unusual presidential pardon to an Indian citizen. This person had been sentenced by a Miami court to 35 years in jail.

This Indian was convicted of committing wire fraud involving \$243,750; setting an incendiary bomb (**terrorism**); attempting to place an explosive device on a ship (**terrorism**); and making an explosive device (**terrorism**).

The criminal and terrorist pardoned by the president of the greatest democracy was a childhood friend of the prime minister of the "largest democracy." His name is Adil Shahryar.

I didn't see the story in American press or on television. Those who permanently live in this country know that even much less important stories find their way on page one.

I brooded over the subject. The reasons became obvious to me. India has credibility with American establishment and has many friends in the right places in American media. India's friends ensured that a negative story about Mr. Gandhi shouldn't appear during his visit or even afterwards.

I am not going to pass judgment on this conduct. But that is the way the "system" works here.

It is not enough to have a "right" cause. The truth and the facts must be communicated to the American people, policy makers and members of the media. Many of us are doing everything we can on this front. But a more concerted and coordinated effort is needed.

It will not produce results overnight. India has a headstart of 40 years. Its resources are enormous. But I felt that a beginning must be made — no matter how modest.

This is the first in a series of pamphlets. Many more are intended on such topics as an analysis of Punjab elections; India's deceitful foreign policy; and suppression of civil liberties in India. But such a campaign requires consistent financial support.

The Sikh Cultural Society (SCS) of Richmond Hill, N.Y. came forward to provide the funds for printing and distribution of this pamphlet. I thank them personally and on behalf of every Sikh everywhere. The SCS has set a noble example and I am sure others will follow it.

It is very important to inform and educate American public opinion. And that is not the responsibility of one Sikh or some Sikhs. It is the responsibility of all Sikhs.

Ganga Singh Dhillon  
President, World Sikh Organization-USA

November 15, 1985

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## WHO ARE THE SIKHS?

The Sikhs are a people with an independent history, a unique religion akin to both Judaism and Christianity, a language and a homeland. In these respects the Sikhs are like the Jews, the Irish, the Ukrainians and the Armenians. They are an independent people who trace their heritage to the invading army of Alexander the Great over 2000 years ago; the Khalsa, which marked their beginning as a Nation in 1699; and through the Sikh commonwealth (1730-1849) which ruled the Punjab — their modern homeland — and parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir and India.

Sikhism is the youngest of internationally recognized religions. In its five hundred years of existence, it has joined the ranks of the world's top five religions with the largest following — Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Jews.

Sikhism's founder, Guru Nanak, was born in India in 1469. He said: "There is one God. He is the Supreme Truth. He is the Creator and Omnipresent. He is eternal and all pervasive."

Sikhism is modern, scientific, practical and the youngest religion. The idea of religion came to the human mind when it craved for equilibrium, equanimity, harmony and peace. Just two decades before Martin Luther posted his 95 theses, the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and nine subsequent Gurus preached the philosophy of absolute oneness of God and the brotherhood of humankind. Guru Nanak taught:

"There is one God; HE is the Supreme Truth; HE, the Creator, is without fear or enmity; HE, the Omnipresent, pervades the Universe; HE, being unborn, cannot die to be born again; through His grace, All may worship HIM."

According to Sikh belief, Guru Nanak was reincarnated nine times — finally in the person of Sikhism's tenth and last prophet, Guru Gobind Singh. The last Guru established the Khalsa — the Sikh Nation — in 1699 and gave it its present identity.

Sikhs are immediately recognized because of their distinguished features — a full beard and turban. However, the last Guru also commanded the Sikhs to wear 5 Ks. These are: Kara — a steel bracelet; Kachha — an underwear; Kangha — a comb; Kais — unshorn hair; and Kirpan — a miniature sword.

The introduction of the sword was of special psychological significance. As a new and minority religion caught between two giants — Hinduism and Islam — Sikhs were subjected to battering and persecution. The sword was not a symbol of militancy but of self-defense. It was in this spirit that on April 13, 1699, the first-five baptized beloved ones of Sikhism made a solemn pledge: "The sword never will be used as an offensive weapon under any circumstances."

tors, engineers, architects and white collar professionals. Their largest overseas concentrations are in the United Kingdom and Canada.

How come such a decent, hardworking and God-fearing people got stuck with such horrible labels as "terrorists" and "hijackers"? It is complex. The scope of this brief introduction doesn't allow for a detailed explanation.

It is very difficult to be a minority. It is even more difficult when a majority (Hindus) launches a deliberate campaign to discredit a minority (Sikhs). At one time, Christians were not perceived as human beings but simply as food for wild Roman pets. Blacks were niggers and Jews were hymies.

With great effort and a painful process the above mentioned communities were able to secure their rightful place and shake off stereotype images.

This is the very purpose of this pamphlet — the first in a series. The Sikhs of Northern America are confident that once our native friends understand the true nature of Sikhism, the complex problems that Sikhs face as an ethnic and religious minority, and the true motivations of India's Hindu majority in their campaign to discredit the Sikhs, they — our native friends — will perceive Sikhs as a minority involved in a struggle for its very survival.

There is a fine line between terrorism and a war of liberation. It was recognized in 1776 and many times since then.

The Sikhs are confident that the world community — and particularly the freedom loving North Americans — will understand and appreciate and eventually support the Sikh struggle for national self-determination in India.

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## INDIAN REPRESSION OF SIKHS

The words **Punjab** and **Sikh** burst on the global scene in 1984 and have commanded considerable attention since then. The popular perception is that a "handful of terrorists" are committing acts of violence and the government of the so-called "largest democracy" in the world is trying to fight this campaign. Recently, the Western world itself has faced considerable violence and terrorism in one form or another. An ignorance of the Sikh/Punjab issues and a general anger towards terrorism as such has created a tendency in most circles to simplify matters.

What are the issues? Did the violence begin as a last resort weapon towards deliberate neglect of Sikhs by the Government of India? And, is the Government of India (and India's Hindu majority) indulging in a calculated campaign of wiping out a religious minority?

The Sikh nation maintains that the current repressive attitude of the Indian Government is nothing new. The Hindu community and its leadership are determined not only to exterminate the Sikhs but also other potent minorities.

### Historical Background:

Currently, Sikhs constitute about 2 percent of the Indian population. In the undivided British India, an independent Sikh State was finally annexed in 1848. In 1957, Sikhs launched a movement for a "Punjabi Suba" — a separate province where all persons who spoke Punjabi language could enjoy the freedom of preserving and promoting their cultural heritage. Sikhs also declared their support for the Indian Freedom Movement.

As early as 1929-30, Mohandas K. Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had declared that Sikhs would be treated as a distinct separate entity and no Indian constitution would be approved without the participation and endorsement of Sikhs.

In 1946, both the British and the Muslim leader Mohammad Ali Jinnah tried to persuade the Sikhs not to join the Hindus. But Gandhi and Nehru repeated their unqualified assurances on Sikhs' rights and these assurances were accepted in good faith.

However, the 1950 Indian constitution came as a shock to the Sikh nation. It declared Sikhs as part of the Hindu majority religion. The Sikh leader in the Indian constituent assembly, Hukam Singh, rejected this clause but the constitution was adopted since the Hindu Congress had a majority.

Why would a "secular state" try to define the religion of any segment of its population?

This question is at the heart of Sikh-Hindu confrontation.

The scope of this pamphlet does not permit the luxury of further

historical detail. However, it is a verifiable fact that Sikhs in Punjab and elsewhere in India are victims of terrorism by a ruthless majority and its equally ruthless political leadership.

This pamphlet will briefly deal with some important aspects of human rights violations in India such as: 1) The Indian Government has consistently attempted to suppress peaceful dissent; 2) Distorted information is used to prove that all violence in Punjab is initiated by "Sikh militants" and only non-Sikhs are the victims; 3) The Indian Government and Hindu community is practicing Nazi/Fascist doctrine of Class Guilt — to punish all members of a community for the alleged crimes of a few; 4) The Sikhs are not protected by laws of the country or its judicial system.

### **Suppression of Peaceful Dissent:**

The Indian and international press and world leaders acknowledged that recently assassinated Sikh leader Harchand Singh Longowal was a "moderate" leader. In an interview with India's most respected bi-weekly magazine *India Today* (October 15, 1982), Longowal said:

"The promises (of Gandhi and Nehru) should be honoured. In 35 years of independence Sikhs have been treated as second class citizens . . . We have been subjected to gross injustice . . . (All political parties like) Congress, Janata Party, Lok Dal, the communists — all have led peaceful protests. But when we wanted to go to Delhi and protest, our buses were stopped, our trucks seized and damaged. Four Sikhs were killed . . . trains were searched and Sikhs dragged out . . . Mrs. Gandhi is living in a fool's paradise if she thinks the Sikhs can be kept as slaves."

The interview contained no threats of violence but the magazine still headlined it as a "Militant Stand." Such calculated media angles have contributed a great deal towards creating a negative image of Sikh nation as being "extremist and terrorist."

As a result of this successful campaign, innocent Sikh victims of the Indian Government's terrorism are finding that many western nations are reluctant to grant them refuge or even allow them to come as visitors.

The Longowal interview also shows that Sikhs were victims of state-backed Hindu communal violence. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale (assassinated during the Indian army's attack on the Golden Temple) was considered as the cause of all violence in Punjab. But even before he arrived on the scene as an effective political force, Sikhs were deprived of their inalienable right to peaceful political dissent.

Another glaring example of the Indian Government's chronic intolerance for peaceful dissent came to light during the Indian prime minister's 1985 visit to the United States. The National Press Club invited the Indian ambassador to address a meeting on June 7, 1985 and it also invited the prime minister to speak at a luncheon on June 14. However, the club invited an American Sikh leader, Sardar Ganga Singh Dhillon, to express his views on the situation in Indian Punjab. This meeting was set for June 11.

The Indian Government reacted angrily in Delhi and Washington; it called the invitation a "gross discourtesy" to the Indian prime minister; demanded a cancellation and sought the U.S. State Department's help to pressure the club; threatened that if Dhillon was allowed to speak then the prime minister would cancel his luncheon speech; and the entire Indian press painted the event as a US-Pakistan conspiracy to embarrass the prime minister and cited it as a "proof" of a "foreign hand" in the political situation in Punjab.

In the best traditions of impartiality, the National Press Club refused to withdraw the invitation.

The episode, however, raises many interesting questions: 1) The Indian ambassador and Indian prime minister used the club forum to express their version of the Punjab situation but in their view a Sikh should not have been allowed to present his side of the story; 2) If an American citizen's peaceful dissent in America (on the subject of Punjab) is unacceptable to the Indian Government then is it conceivable that it would allow this to happen in India? The answer may be found in the following episode.

On September 16, 1985, *The New York Times* reported that the Indian Government had confiscated and destroyed copies of a report on the government's brutal handling of the Punjab situation. The report was compiled by an independent civil liberties group, Citizens for Democracy. It asserted that "clearly innocent" people had been arrested and the police in Punjab had carried out "sadistic torture, ruthless killings, fake encounters, calculated ill treatment of women and children, and corruption and graft on a large scale."

The foreword of "Oppression in Punjab" was written by a respected judge, V.M. Tarkunde. The judge and others involved in the preparation and printing of the report have been charged with sedition. Chandra Shekhar, prominent opposition leader and president of the Janata Party, has accused prime minister Rajiv Gandhi of "sustained attempts to suppress the civil rights of the people."

These points should be noted: A) Those who prepared the report were not Sikhs; B) None of them had any record of supporting the separatist movement; C) They had not attempted to incite or condone violence.

The simple fact that they considered some Sikhs to be innocent victims of state terrorism was enough to accuse them of sedition.

These are only a few examples of how the Indian Government has attempted to suppress peaceful dissent at home and abroad.

By systematically and forcefully closing all doors to peaceful dissent the Indian Government has left the Sikh nation with two options: 1) To surrender to the Hindu majority and lose their distinct cultural and religious identity; or 2) To find alternate ways of expressing their dissent. In this case, the Indian Government has the resources and the international clout to discredit the entire Sikh nation; force foreign governments to close their

doors to Sikh refugees so that they cannot escape to more secure environments and can be easily slaughtered in the Punjab.

### **The Disinformation:**

The Indian Government and its state controlled radio and television have conducted a sustained campaign of disinformation.

The Indian Government claimed the violence in Punjab had reached such levels that an all-out assault on the Sikh holy shrine, the Golden Temple, was the only way to deal with the situation.

The Indian White Paper on this operation claims that 485 persons were killed as a result of violence between March 1981 and June 1984. Of these 132 were Hindus; 211 were Sikhs and 114 were from other communities: When a Sikh is killed he/she is referred to as a "person." But when a Hindu is killed he/she is referred to as "Hindu" thus creating the false impression that Sikhs were killing Hindus. The fact is that more Sikhs were killed than Hindus.

These 485 also include murders committed by criminals. Delhi has a population one-third that of the Punjab but 244 persons were killed there in 1983 alone. In Uttar Pradesh state, 17,470 murders were committed in two years — 1982-84 (*Indian Express*, January 28, 1984). Compared to these, a total number of 485 murders in three years in Punjab showed that it was a much more crime-free society in India. The Indian government attributed all these murders to Sikh "militants" to justify its attack on the Golden Temple.

The Indian Government claimed that the Golden Temple was used as sanctuary by "terrorists."

*Illustrated Weekly* of India (July 22, 1984) challenged this assertion by saying: "Only once (late 1982) . . . a list of 40 criminals (was sent) to (temple administrative body) SGPC . . . (which found) that 18 could just not be in the Golden Temple. Some were in Pakistani jails . . . some in Canada and West Germany by government's own admission in Parliament . . . the remainder 22 couldn't be located inside (the temple) . . . Later, in (lower house) home minister P.C. Sethi admitted these facts. . . ."

The *Manchester Guardian* (June 27, 1984) disputed Indian Government claims that Golden Temple was a sanctuary for "terrorists." It said: "The one requirement for terrorism is secrecy. One would not advertise and plan terrorism from, say, the concourse of Waterloo Station. Similarly, the Golden Temple with its famous four doors to emphasize its welcome (to all) have precluded its use by any group intent on serious terrorism. A secret telephone number is a useful asset for organizing terrorism. The phones in-to Golden Temple were known to, and tapped by police.

Inside, right up to the time of the attack, pilgrims, and visitors, including foreign press, were free to go into any part of the Temple complex. Outside, a heavy police presence had existed for more than a year at each entrance to the Golden Temple."

The Indian Government claimed that heavy fortification of the Golden Temple was a proof of it being used as a terrorist base.

However, the government fails to point out that such heavy fortifications were the result of constant hints by the government that it would forcibly enter the temple. Most of the arms recovered from the temple were light arms used commonly for self-defense. And since the Indian army did not allow any neutral observers during the assault or afterwards, there is no way to determine if these arms were actually found in the temple or planted by the army to make a case for its assault.

Magazine *India Today* called the White Paper "operation whitewash." Monthly magazine *Surya* (August 1984) called the coverage by government television a "flood of amateurish propaganda. . . ."

### **The Theory of Class Guilt:**

Most recently, the theory of Class Guilt was practiced by Hitler. He declared an entire people as enemy of the state and set out to eliminate them. The free world still bemoans this barbaric assault on humanity.

It is interesting that a similar practice by the Indian Government is not being noticed by the free world. The reason is that Indians have improved upon the art of holocaust. Hitler was a "dictator" in a hurry to destroy an entire people. India is taking its time. Moreover, it is a "democracy" and, therefore, the "holocaust" is being implemented by the "private sector" and perhaps more acceptable to the West.

In India, minorities are destroyed by the Hindu majority while the police and the army look the other way. And the wrath of this ruthless majority is not directed towards those who might be directly accused of being involved in an act ostensibly provocative to the majority. This applies to both peaceful and violent acts.

Two examples may illustrate the point. When Sardar Ganga Singh Dhillon was speaking at the National Press Club (Washington, D.C.) both Indian and Western media said this in essence: Since Indira Gandhi was allegedly attacked and killed by two Sikh guards in New Delhi, it was, therefore, inappropriate for the press club to let an American Sikh speak in America (10,000 miles away) on the day the Indian prime minister was to arrive in the United States.

Dhillon is not related to the accused assassins. He did not advocate violence. Just because Mrs. Gandhi's attackers were Sikhs does not mean that no Sikh anywhere in the world can make a peaceful expression of his views on the day of the arrival of the Indian prime minister in that part of the world.

Another (and more horrible) example of this theory of Class Guilt came to light in the November 1984 riots after the death of Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

It may be noted that Sikhs in New Delhi and elsewhere outside Punjab had nothing to do with violence inside Punjab.

The precision with which organized Hindu mobs singled out Sikh neighborhoods and Sikh homes in mixed neighborhoods was amazing. And more disgusting than amazing was the active participation of the police in such acts and the calculated indifference of the army.

The *Los Angeles Times* (November 6, 1984) reported: "All human life obliterated: Civilization broke down at Sikh colony near Delhi. When the history is written of the horrors that followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the 32nd block of Trilokpur colony will be remembered as a place where civilization disintegrated."

The *Washington Post* (November 6, 1984) wrote: "... when historians scrutinize the inhumaneness that swept through India for four long days ... it may become a benchmark."

International media covering the tragedy was also a target of official wrath. The *Washington Post* (November 5, 1984) carried a UPI story saying a mob beat up three photographers while police withheld aid. French photographer Dieter Ludwig said a police inspector handed him back to a mob of 30 persons from whom the photographer had escaped and had begged the police officer for help.

A private civil liberties group has compiled an excellent record of mob and police brutalities against Sikhs in the aftermath of Indira's assassination. The book called "Who are the guilty" was banned by the Indian Government.

Apart from human tragedy, the most disturbing aspect of this anti-Sikh campaign is that places of worship and religious documents are made a deliberate target of both mob and state terrorism.

The government chose to attack the Golden Temple during a week of religious sanctity. There was more than a normal number of pilgrims inside the temple. As a result, thousands of innocent men, women and children were killed.

According to news accounts six tanks were deployed along with other armored vehicles. The Golden Temple was badly damaged and some of its rare religious documents were destroyed.

In subsequent rioting in Delhi, places of worships were once again the targets. There was no terrorist campaign in Delhi and no prior reports that Sikh temples were a sanctuary for "terrorists." But still 340 out of 450 Sikh temples in Delhi were either damaged or destroyed.

All this leads one to suspect that the Indian Government and Hindu majority is determined to implement the constitutional clause which insists that Sikhs are not a separate people. And one way to accomplish that goal is to physically destroy the religious foundations — in terms of holy documents and places of worships — on one hand and psychologically intimidate Sikhs into accepting the Hindu religion as the only means of survival and advancement.

## **Repression Through the Law:**

There is a popular misbelief in the west that victims of such gross injustice can seek redress through the judicial system. It seems logical since India is perceived to be a democracy.

But Indian Government has introduced new legislation and amended old ones to nullify whatever fairness one could expect under a judicial system of a free world country. "Black Laws 1984" is an excellent pamphlet on these laws.

The Terrorist Affected Areas Ordinance and the amended National Security Act make it impossible for a Sikh to seek protection of normal laws. These laws were introduced or amended to meet the situation in Punjab and so far there is no evidence that these have been applied against Hindus.

Persons may be arrested without a cause; names of their accusers and witnesses may not be revealed and they may be tried in courts far away from their normal places of residence.

And in 1985, another legislation was passed under which the property in India of any Sikh residing overseas may be confiscated if such a person is accused of supporting a separatist cause in Punjab. Obviously, this is an attempt to intimidate overseas Sikh communities so that they would not raise their voice against the atrocities committed against their fellow Sikhs in India.

The Indian Government has refused to allow visits to Punjab by foreign journalists, visitors, human rights groups and even Congressional leaders of the United States.

India has more than six divisions of army in Punjab and recently added 150,000 police and paramilitary forces to conduct "elections" in Punjab. While these forces were there to "protect" political candidates, such overwhelming force could have been easily used to intimidate voters into doing whatever the government wanted them to do.

The Sikhs are faced with religious and cultural extinction in India. Their efforts to leave India and settle overseas are frustrated by the reluctance of foreign governments who either do not understand the plight of the Sikhs or are afraid to annoy the Indian Government.

The Sikh struggle for nationhood is not the product of alleged terrorism that began in 1983-84. It is centuries old. One is reminded of the prophetic words of Mohandas K. Gandhi who, while trying to reassure Sikhs, said in March 1929:

"Sikh friends have no reason to fear that (Congress Party) will betray them. (If it does) Congress would not only thereby seal its own doom but that of the country too. Moreover, Sikhs are a Great People. They know how to safeguard their rights by exercise of arms if it should ever come to that."

Gandhi was an acknowledged advocate of non-violence. But the use of

arms to defend one's life and liberty is recognized under all codes of conduct. The Sikh nation has been forced into this situation.

Even if alleged extremist conduct on part of some Sikhs is perceived as terrorism, it does not mean that innocent members of Sikh nation should be deprived of international sympathy for their suffering.

The Palestine Liberation Organization is considered a "terrorist" group. But that does not prevent the world — and even the United States — from providing relief to Palestinian refugees.

Today, the Sikh masses in India need the protection of international agencies or they will vanish into a hysteria of Hindu fanaticism backed by the Government of India.

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# SIKH STRUGGLE FOR RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL FREEDOM: 1848-1985

The Sikh religion was founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1539). Sikhism's tenth and last prophet, Guru Gobind Singh, gave the religion its present philosophy and form in 1699. Fiercely independent Sikhs always wanted a sovereign state where they could live according to their own religious beliefs and cultural preferences.

In the 19th century this struggle for statehood did succeed, briefly. It has been followed by another 135 years of intense, and sometimes frustrating, struggle. The following chronology represents some major events in this movement for self-determination.

- 1848** The British annex independent Sikh state in India.
- 1877** Sikhs launch Singh Sabha movement and support Indian independence.
- 1880** Mahraja Daleep Singh (son of the founder of sovereign Sikh state, Mahraja Ranjeet Singh) joins Indian independence movement.
- 1893** Sikhs begin emigration to the United States and Canada. California and Vancouver become their main residences. Overseas Sikhs form Ghadar Party to support Indian independence movement.
- 1900** British rulers in India begin harsh treatment of freedom fighters. The campaign extends right up to 1947. Out of 121 freedom fighters sentenced to death 93 were Sikhs; out of 2,646 life sentences 2,147 were for Sikhs.
- 1919** The British kill 1,302 freedom fighters of which 799 were Sikhs.
- 1921** Sikh's major political party — the Akali Dal — and Singh Sabah movement intensify efforts to free India from British rule.
- 1929** Indian Congress leadership pledges solemn support for Sikh aspirations. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru says “. . . after independence no Indian constitution will be approved without Sikh (endorsement) . . . .” Mohandas Gandhi reassures Sikhs that if Congress betrays them, Sikhs “know how to safeguard their rights by exercise of arms if it comes to that.”
- 1940** Sikh soldiers begin desertion from the British army during World War II and join rebel Indian National Army (INA) under General Mohan Singh and Colonel G.S. Dhillon. Overseas Sikhs support INA.
- 1946** Partition of India is finalized. Sikhs opt to join India on Hindu assurances for complete autonomy and religious freedom.

- 1947 All India Muslim League (the party which demanded creation of Pakistan) offers Sikhs an autonomous state within Pakistan. Nehru and Gandhi again persuade Sikhs to reject the idea.
- 1950 The Indian Constitution is adopted but Hukum Singh, the Akali Dal (political party of the Sikhs) member of the constituent assembly, declares: "The Sikhs do not accept this constitution."
- 1956 Indian states are reorganized on a linguistic basis but the Akali Dal's demand for a Punjabi-speaking state is rejected by Hindu government.
- 1960 The Akali Dal launches a campaign for a Punjabi-speaking state.
- 1966 Faced with prolonged campaigning, New Delhi creates a Punjabi-speaking state but the state capital of Chandigarh is withheld as also many other Punjabi-speaking areas.
- 1969 Akali leader Jagjit Singh Chauhan demands an independent Sikh homeland — **Khalistan**.
- 1970 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announces that Chandigarh will be incorporated into Punjab but the decision is not implemented.
- 1973 Akali convention at Anandpur Sahib adopts a resolution seeking greater autonomy for Punjab state.
- 1976 New Delhi awards a greater share of the waters of Punjab's Ravi and Beas rivers to adjoining states in stark violation of the Riparian principles.
- 1977 Punjab's new Akali government refuses to implement the river-waters award by the central authorities and seeks redress with the Supreme Court.
- 1980 The Congress party returns to power in Punjab and withdraws the Supreme Court case.
- 1981 Ganga Singh Dhillon, an American citizen and president of All India Sikh Educational Conference, declares in his presidential address at Chandigarh, Punjab, that Indian Punjab is the "Sikh Homeland." He also asserts that "Sikhs are a separate nation." Akali Dal and SGPC, the highest religious body of Sikhs, endorses Dhillon's call for recognition of "Sikh nationhood."
- 1982 Communal riots take place in Indian Punjab. Hindu mobs desecrate Sikh shrines. Sikhs retaliate. In November, Akalis threaten to disrupt Asian Games in New Delhi. Government intensifies crackdown on Sikhs.
- 1983 Through peaceful protest, Sikhs paralyze government machinery. Punjab turned into police state and hundreds are arrested or killed. Martial Law imposed.

**1984** Large scale state sponsored terrorism against Sikhs begins. Hindu mobs burn Sikh places of worships; shops looted; scores killed. Hindu dominated police and army look the other way.

**May:** Security forces open fire at Golden Temple in Amritsar — holiest of Sikh holy shrines. Firing continues for 14 hours.

**June 3:** Foreign correspondents ordered out of Punjab. Borders with Pakistan sealed.

**June 6:** Under Operation Blue Star, Indian Army attacks Golden Temple; kills thousands of Sikh men, women and children who were in the temple for one of the most important religious occasions; army destroys Akal Takht — the holy place where religious holy records and books are kept; Indian army personnel take away all jewels and valuables in the temple. All over India 74 Sikh Gurdwaras (places of worships) are also attacked.

Sikh soldiers begin desertion from army; civil and foreign service Sikh officials resign in protest. Army begins “search and destroy” operation in the Punjab countryside. Since then 60,000 Sikh youths are reported missing.

**October 31:** Indira Gandhi is assassinated. An alleged Sikh assassin is killed in police custody. Rajive Gandhi becomes prime minister after circumventing succession provisions of ruling Congress party.

Hindu mobs in New Delhi and other cities launch a four-day campaign of terror against Sikh civilians. Police cooperates with mobs and army delays action.

**1985** Rajive Gandhi begins first term as elected prime minister.

**May:** Rajive releases those Sikh leaders who were reportedly leaning towards government. Visits Moscow.

**July 25:** Rajive Gandhi and Akali leader Harchand Singh Longowal sign an accord to end Punjab dispute. Sikhs in Punjab and all over the world reject this accord as a “sell out.”

**August: 20** Longowal is assassinated. Gandhi announces elections in Punjab.

**September:** Akali Dal wins majority in Punjab elections. Releases some political prisoners.

**October:** Sikhs demand that repairs of Akal Takht be undone because those were done by non-Sikhs. They also want to preserve the destroyed Akal Takht for coming Sikh generations to show what Indian army had done. On October 31, 35,000 Sikhs gather in Golden Temple (the day of Indira Gandhi’s assassination). Hundreds of Sikhs pull down railings of Akal Takht.

# THE WORLD SIKH ORGANIZATION

On July 28, 1984, World Sikh Organization (WSO) was established. It was an historic as well as an emotional occasion for more than 5,000 Sikhs who had come from all over the world to New York City's Madison Square Garden.

Barely two months earlier, the holiest of their holy shrines in Amristsar, India, had been attacked by Indian troops. Close to 10,000 men, women and children were killed by soldiers who were ostensibly looking for a "handful of terrorists." The Indian army chose one of the three holiest days in Sikh religion to enter the Golden Temple. Thousands of pilgrims were inside the temple. The day was chosen deliberately to inflict maximum loss of life on the Sikh nation.

The Government of India had sent a "message."

The "message" had to be taken seriously. It meant a rude awakening for the international Sikh community. It suddenly found itself stuck with such terrible labels as "extremists and terrorists." The Sikhs realized that even though they had lived for decades in North America, Europe and the Far East still the world knew very little about them. It was in the soil of this ignorance that Indian propaganda bloomed quickly.

The WSO was established with two objectives in mind. First, to support the struggle of Sikhs in Indian Punjab for self-determination and for the preservation of their distinct religious and ethnic identity. WSO's second objective is to strive to unite overseas Sikh communities. The international Sikh leadership had always suspected that Indian government agents were trying to discredit Sikhs living abroad. Some innocent Sikhs had been extradited on trumped up charges. Even such havens of dissidents as Great Britain are reluctant to give asylum to any Sikh accused (without proof) of terrorism by the Indian government.

These suspicions were proven true in late November 1985 when the respected Canadian newspaper *Globe and Mail* carried a three-part story culminating four months of investigative reporting. The story made these points: A) Indian agents had infiltrated Sikh organizations in Canada (specifically International Sikh Youth Federation and WSO chapters) to conduct terrorist activities to discredit Sikhs in the eyes of the natives. B) Indian intelligence operated under diplomatic cover (illegally) and provided financial support of anti-Sikh Indian groups. C) That Indian agents were at least aware of the bombing of the Indian jet in which 329 were killed and also an explosion in a suitcase at Tokyo airport killing two baggage handlers. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police "investigators believe Indian government agents to be responsible for the bombings. . .", the *Globe* said. D) That Indian diplomats and intelligence deliberately misled the

Canadian government and media to avoid discovery of Indian government involvement in such terrorist activities.

The *Globe* story indicates that the government of India is determined to destroy the WSO through questionable, illegal and terrorist methods.

WSO's ultimate objective is to show the world that Sikhs are the victims of terrorism and the real terrorists are the paid and obedient servants of the government of India.

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